

**MINUTES
STATE PRESERVES ADVISORY BOARD
OCTOBER 8, 2004**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Neil Bernstein, Chair
Robin Fortney
Cindy Peterson
Liz Christiansen

STAFF PRESENT

John Pearson
Tom O'Neill

ADVISORS PRESENT

Bob McKay

BOARD TOUR

The Board visited the Prairie and Fossil Park on Thursday, October 7th at 1:00. The tour was open to the public.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Neil Bernstein called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM on October 8, 2004 at the Floyd County Conservation Board Fossil and Prairie Center near Rockford.

Since there was no quorum, no decisions could be made.

Neil Bernstein said that in the next seven days he will e-mail the decision items to absent board members asking for their feedback.

Items that will need a decision include:

- Minutes from the July SPAB meeting
- Lamson Woods
- Scenic Preserve study
- Seed Harvest Policy

We will also need to give feedback to the Floyd County Conservation and to the Banisters and McGregors.

John Pearson said that he will attempt to set up an alternative meeting date to make decisions before the next board meeting in January.

OATH OF OFFICE

Cindy Peterson from the state archeologist office took the oath of office.

LAMSON WOODS

A walking trail through the northeast part of Lamson Woods has been proposed to connect with a new trail outside of the Preserve. At the July meeting, the Board requested preparation of a plan to address future trail maintenance. A letter was received in September clarifying all aspects relating to the proposed walking trail. Their intention is to preserve the integrity of Lamson Woods by having the lowest possible level of disturbance to the existing ecosystem. To that end, they proposed to do the following:

- Only use the existing, one person wide, trail that is already in place.
- Promise that this trail will never be widened, surfaced or improved.
- Have a limited amount of hand clipping of individual shrub stems growing into the trail, from the northeast corner of Preserve approximately 150' west, until the trail becomes open and clear.
- In the unlikely event that foot traffic on the new connector increases to the point that the footpath does need work, such as a gravel or mulch layer, installation of a waterbar, etc. to prevent excessive wear or erosion, the Trails Council and/or Park & Recreation department would make that improvement under the direction of the Preserve Board.

The plan was distributed for the Board's approval.

John Pearson suggested that Mark Edwards, our trails advisor in the DNR, could visit the site to look it over. John said that physical impacts and erosion problems would be minor.

PRESERVE NOMINATION UPDATES

Banister-McGregor Woods – The management plan for the proposed "Eureka Woods" preserve was circulated for review.

John Pearson said that item number 5 on page 10 of the draft management plan deals with managing and keeping up the fences; the Banisters and McGregor's both said that they do not want the responsibility of building or maintaining the fence. They would like to have some other agency, perhaps the DNR, to build and maintain the fences. John said that he doesn't think the DNR would have this responsibility, since the DNR does not own the property.

The following concerns were discussed:

- Using the artesian well for geo-thermal heating. Would that affect the integrity of the land? Neil requested more information on the owner's ideas for using the artesian well for geo-thermal heating. Will it affect the springs flow, Indian culture, or the status of the road? Is there even enough volume of water? Is it an artesian well or artesian spring?
- Will the planned/proposed house interfere with any archeological sites?
- Signs being erected at the discretion of the owners?

These are issues that need to be addressed before a decision is made.

Liz Christiansen asked for knowledge of the status of the proposed roadway in the area. John Pearson was going to check into that.

Hartman Bluff – Dedication papers have been signed by the County Conservation Board, Board of Supervisors and Preserves Board Chairman. Awaiting the Governor's signature.

Liz Christiansen will contact the Governor's office to find out the status of the dedication signing.

<i>Information Only</i>

SEED HARVEST REQUEST

Mr. John Shepard was given permission to harvest seed from Cedar Hills Sand Prairie. He will use the seed on his property, which is in the same section as the preserve. Collection of seed from the preserve ensures that local ecotype seed is used for the proposed restoration.

John Pearson said that with approval from a few board members, he went ahead and gave Mr. Shepard permission to harvest the local ecotype seed.

<i>Information Only</i>

SCENIC PRESERVE

The final report of the scenic preserve study was included with the agenda. The Board will be asked to adopt the report recommendations.

Neil Bernstein said that on page five of the final report study of the Designation of Scenic Preserves in Iowa, the first sentence of the first paragraph seems to be incorrect.

“The issue of cultural and historic resources was discussed and the committee decided that given that the State Preserves Advisory Board has directed its attention towards sites with ecological or biological importance...”

He said that we have looked at archeological and historical sites; there are three currently in the works. I don't believe this is a fair statement. Neil recommended striking the first sentence before approval of this study.

John Pearson said that this was written to address Laura Jackson's comments about inclusion of agricultural areas as scenic. We limited our scope as a committee to natural areas, since it was too hard to address every issue.

Robin Fortney said that they could rewrite the first sentence, per Neil's comments.

<i>Information Only</i>

FOSSIL AND PRAIRIE PARK

The Floyd County Conservation Board has nominated the Fossil and Prairie Park for preserve dedication. A draft management plan was provided to Board members for review.

Neil Bernstein said that the three types of preserve status are represented at this site; natural preserve, geological preserve and historical preserve status. The natural areas are being managed by a diverse management scheme.

It has been discussed that the board should exclude the areas from preserve status that have had restoration work. Some areas have had substantial impact from plantings or reduced plantings.

Doug Schroeder asked why the whole property couldn't be protected as a preserve. It would make it easier for future management of the land if every area was protected, rather than just certain areas.

Neil Bernstein suggested that maybe a different type/level of protection could be put in place for the areas that have been disturbed, since preserve status is the highest level of protection available.

Barb McKinstry said that conservation easements do not protect against ATV's and horses, and that is the level of protection that we prefer since many pieces of restored land are in the center.

Neil Bernstein asked if the management plan could be re-written so that C4 and the wetland mitigation could be treated not as natural habitat but as a buffer to the central core of native areas.

Bob McKay said that the soil conservation is very important for buffer areas.

Neil Bernstein suggested that an insect survey be done. He said the board should be able to make the final vote regarding this property at the January meeting.

Cindy Peterson noted that the outcrops in C4 qualified the area as a geological preserve no matter what the vegetation type was at present.

KEEPERS OF THE LAND

Tom O'Neill asked the board about their need for volunteers. The Keepers of the Land program involves volunteers who ready to provide service to help enhance and conserve our natural resources.

Neil Bernstein said that simple monitoring would be a great help. For example, a walk through the preserve once a month, removal of invasive species, update on conditions of historical sites, (generate a fund-raiser to help pay for restoration). A needs assessment for each preserve would be beneficial.

John Pearson and John Walkowaik would be good contacts for knowing how to identify invasive species, and reconstruction of structures in a detailed manner, which would help the volunteer's knowledge in these areas.

Board members suggested having a training course made available to volunteers that would help them in their knowledge of prairies and preserves.

RESEARCH UPDATES

Jerry Selby submitted a progress report on a butterfly survey of several northwest Iowa prairie preserves.

<i>Information Only</i>

PRESERVE MANAGEMENT REPORT FORMS

At the July meeting the idea of providing preserve managers with a short report from to describe management activities was mentioned. Copies of a draft form prepared by Dennis Schlicht for prairie preserves was included for review.

Scott Moats sent an e-mail response to Neil Bernstein on several issues dealing with management burns. Scott agrees that on small isolated parcels, burning large tracts is unacceptable. He also advocates with Dennis Schlicht on the combined strategy to divide habitats. He likes the idea of mowing and hand clearing when possible.

Neil Bernstein said the board was not informed that Stinson prairie would be burned as one whole parcel rather than burning in quarters. There needs to be good, open communication between the preserves board and the preserve land managers.

John Pearson discussed his comments regarding the recommendations from Dennis Schlicht for Preserving Prairie Biodiversity. He agreed with most of the items but expressed concern at two of them.

#7. – Burn in 5-10 year cycles.

We may need more frequent burns than the 5-10 year cycles as mentioned in the recommendation. Too prescriptive for a general rule.

#14 - Try a strip burn arrangement. Burn 6-8 narrow strips across the prairie each year...

I support the concept of diversifying the vegetation, however from a fire managers standpoint, burning narrow strips across the prairie is very prone to escape. There is tension between the biological goal of having a diverse burn regime and a practical safe burn.

John Pearson said that we should start looking at diversifying our management ideas other than just burning, possibly include grazing and haying. We plan to discuss further at the January meeting.

Neil Bernstein said that Scott Moats suggested sending a representative to Fire Conference.

It was decided that we would continue this discussion with an emphasis on how to communicate with managers at the January meeting.

<i>Information Only</i>

SEED HARVEST POLICY

John Pearson said that there has been an increasing interest in prairie restoration that coupled with a shortage of local ecotype seed, has led agencies and organizations to request permission to harvest seed from State Preserves. For the past ten years, the State Preserves Advisory Board has considered requests for harvest, on a case-by-case basis, provided the guidelines and application procedures are met.

John Pearson said that haying could be used as a land management option and for seed harvesting, however our current policy does not allow harvesting hay from the preserves and its potential use as a seed source. The Board will discuss this at the January meeting.

CITY OF FORT DODGE

Bob McKay said that there have been a lot more people approaching the preserves board with property they would like to designate with preserve status. Bob generated a letter to Todd Redenius, Director of Fort Dodge Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department about the large quantities of gypsum on the east side of Fort Dodge. Bob informed him of the quality and uniqueness of the rocks, and that they would be suitable candidates for inclusion in the State Preserves System as a superb example representing an important part of Iowa's

geologic history. Bob asked the board members for input regarding the letter's content and action steps.

Neil Bernstein said to put the letter on Preserves Board stationary, signed by him and Bob McKay and send it out suggesting a meeting with the board about the preserve system.

Robin Fortney suggested including the preserves board website and informational brochures as part of the letter. There also needs to be a follow up phone call after the letter has been sent and possibly set up a time to tour the sites.

John Pearson will send Neil Bernstein informational brochures on the preserves system to include in the letter to Todd Redenius.

PRESERVE VISITS

Robin Fortney visited the following preserves:

Silver Lake Fen - access is not very well mapped out

Kalsow Prairie

Malanaphy Springs – new parking lot on south side, signage is needed

Tim Sproul e-mailed Daryl Howell updates:

Sylvan Runkel State Preserve - In general the area looks good. Fencing and boundary marking is and will become more of a problem as years go by. Efforts are ongoing to acquire an adjoining tract (approx. 80 acres) to provide some buffer for the Preserve. Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation is taking the lead for the DNR and it should happen in the near future. Fire is being used to control invasives and larger efforts to manage the local landscape are being pursued by the TNC and Loess Hills Alliance.

John Pearson reported on the following preserves:

Toolesboro Mounds – Verl Lekwa, Chair of the Louisa Co. Historical Preservation Commission is requesting permission from the board to place a sign near the entrance of Toolesboro. Shirley Schermer, of the State Archeologist Office has visited the site and does not foresee any impact to be concerned about; however she did recommend that the dirt from the post holes should be sifted for archeological materials. John Pearson said that once the Indian Burial Advisory Council okays the sign, I believe we should move forward with this relatively low impact event. John Pearson said that he will write Mr. Lekwa a letter of approval.

John Pearson said that he received a phone call from Bill Bixby, great grandson of the owners of Bixby Park before it became a state park. He has historical materials (letters, brochures, paraphernalia, etc) from the 1920's that he would like to transfer to an appropriate agency in the state. John suggested that we

could use the research money from next year to hire a historian to do the oral history and research of this park.

Neil Bernstein reported on the following preserves:

Bixby – People have been reported riding horses on the preserve. John Pearson said he will call Backbone State Park, since the managers there also manage Bixby Preserve.

Mossy Glen – People have been reported to be riding ATVs and horses on the preserve. John Pearson will also look into this issue.

Crossman Prairie – substantial digging and earth moving damage has been observed on the preserve.

Liz Christiansen said she will have an investigation done on who, how and why they have done this.

MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2005

John Pearson will e-mail a list to the board members of possible days to hold preserve meetings in 2005.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come before the State Preserves Advisory Board, Chairperson Neil Bernstein adjourned the meeting at 11:15 AM on October 8, 2004.

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